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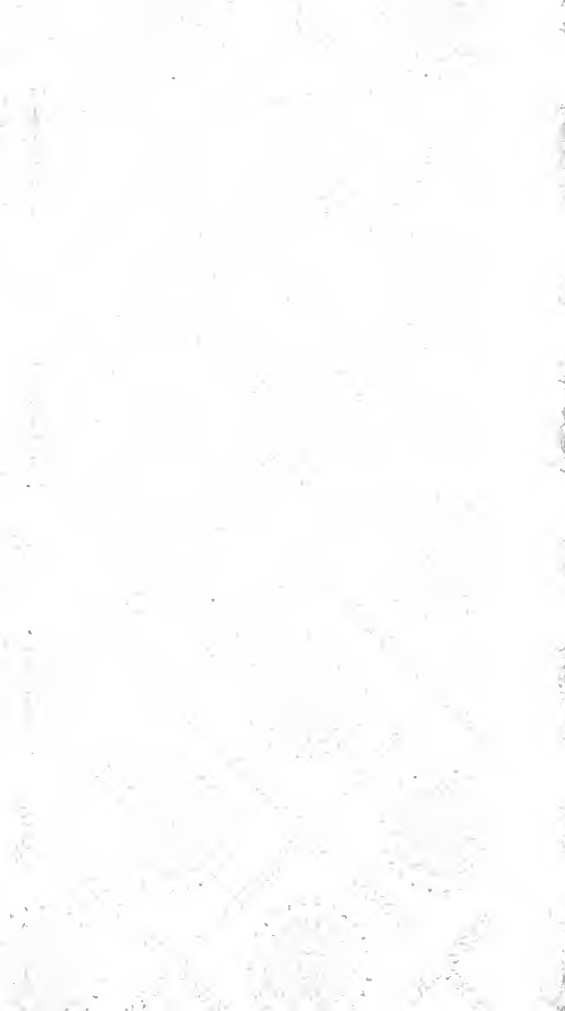
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# THE LESSON OF THE HOUR.

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## LECTURE OF WENDELL PHILLIPS

DELIVERED AT

BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

Tuesday Evening, November 1, 1859.

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*Ladies and Gentlemen*—I speak with the utmost sincerity when I say that I cannot expect—speaking from this platform, and to you—to say anything on the vital question of the hour, which you have not already heard. I should not, in that sense, willingly have come here; but, when a great question divides the community, all men are called upon to vote, and I feel to-night that I am simply giving my vote. I am only saying ‘ditto’ to what you hear from this platform day after day. And I would willingly have avoided, ladies and gentlemen, even at this last moment, borrowing this hour from you. I tried to do better by you. Like the Irishman in the story, I offered to hold the hat of Hon. Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, (enthusiastic applause,) if he would only make a speech, and, most unaccountably, I am sorry to say, he declined this generous offer. (Laughter.) So I must fulfil my appointment, and deliver my little lecture myself.

‘The Lesson of the Hour?’ I think the lesson of the hour is insurrection. [Sensation.] Insurrection of thought always precedes the insurrection of arms. The last twenty years have been insurrection of thought. We seem to be entering on a new phase of the great moral American struggle. It seems to me that we have never accepted, as Americans—we have never accepted our own civilization

We have held back from the inference which we ought to have drawn from the admitted principles which underlie our life. We have all the timidity of the old world, when we bend our eyes upon ideas of the people ; we shrink back, trying to save ourselves from the inevitable might of the thoughts of the millions. The idea of civilization on the other side of the water seems to be, that man is created to be taken care of by somebody else. God did not leave him fit to go alone ; he is in everlasting pupillage to the wealthy and the educated. The religious or the comfortable classes are an ever-present probate court to take care of him. The Old World, therefore, has always distrusted the average conscience—the common sense of the millions.

It seems to me the idea of our civilization—underlying all American life—is, that we do not need any protector. We need no safeguard. Not only the inevitable, but the best, power this side of the ocean, is the unfettered average common sense of the masses. Institutions, as we are accustomed to call them, are but pasteboard, and intended to be against the thought of the street. Statutes are mere milestones, telling how far yesterday's thought had travelled ; and the talk of the sidewalk to-day is the law of the land. Somewhat briefly stated, such is the idea of American civilization ; uncompromising faith—in the average selfishness, if you choose—of all classes, neutralizing each other, and tending toward that fair play that Saxons love. It seems to me that, on all questions, we dread thought ; we shrink behind something ; we acknowledge ourselves unequal to the sublime faith of our fathers ; and the exhibition of the last twenty years and of the present state of public affairs is, that Americans dread to look their real position in the face.

They say in Ireland that every Irishman thinks

that he was born sixty days too late—(laughter)—and the world owes him sixty days. The consequence is, when a trader says such a thing is so much for cash, the Irishman thinks cash means to him a bill of sixty days. (Laughter.) So it is with Americans. They have no idea of absolute right. They were born since 1787, and absolute right means the truth diluted by a strong decoction of the Constitution of '89. They are all in that atmosphere; they don't want to sail outside of it; they do not attempt to reason outside of it. For the last twenty years, there has been going on, more or less heeded and understood in various States, an insurrection of ideas against the limited, cribbed, cabined, isolated American civilization, interfering to restore absolute right—not only that, but the recognition and conviction of absolute truth. If you said to an American, for instance, anything in regard to temperance, slavery, or anything else—in the course of the last twenty years—anything about a principle, he ran back instantly to the safety of such a principle—to the possibility of its existing with a peculiar sect, with a church, with a party, with a constitution, with a law. He had not yet raised himself unto the level of daring to trust justice, which is the preliminary consideration to trusting the people; for whether native depravity be true or not, it is a truth, attested by all history, that the race gravitates towards justice, and that indulging all differences of opinion, there is an inherent, essential tendency to the great English principle of fair-play at the bottom of our natures. (Loud applause.) The Emperor Nicholas, it is said, ordered Col. Whistler, one of his Engineers, to lay down for him a road for a railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow, and presently the engineers brought him in a large piece of fine card-paper, on which was laid down, like a snake, the designed path for the iron locomotive be-

tween the two capitals. 'What's that?' said Nicholas. 'That's the best road,' was the reply. 'What do you make it crooked for?' 'Why, we turn this way to touch this great city, and to the left to reach that immense mass of people, and to the right again to suit the business of that district.' 'Yes.' The Emperor turned the card over, made a new dot for Moscow and another for St. Petersburg, took a ruler, made a straight line, and said, 'Build me that road.' (Laughter.)

'But what will become of that depot of trade, of that town?' 'I don't know; they must look out for themselves.' [Cheers.] And the emperor of omnipotent Democracy says of slavery, or of a church, 'This is justice, and that is iniquity; the track of God's thunderbolt goes in a straight line from one to the other, and the church that cannot stand it must stand out of the way.' [Cheers.] Now our object for twenty years has been to educate the mass of the American people up to that level of moral life, which shall recognize that free speech carried to that extent is God's normal school, educating the American mind, throwing upon it the grave responsibility of deciding a great question, and by means of that responsibility, lifting it to the higher level of an intellectual and moral life. Now scholarship stands on one side, and, like your *Brooklyn Eagle*, says, 'This is madness!' Well, poor man! he thinks so! [Laughter.] The very difficulty of the whole matter is that he does think so, and this normal school that we open is for him. His seat is on the lowest end of the lowest bench. [Laughter and applause.] But he only represents that very chronic distrust which pervades all that class. It is the timid, educated mind of these Northern States. Anacharsis went into the forum at Athens, and heard a case argued by the great minds of the day, and saw the vote. He



walked out into the streets, and somebody said to him, 'What think you of Athenian liberty?' 'I think,' said he, 'wise men argue causes, and fools decide them.' Just what the timid scholar two thousand years ago said in the streets of Athens, that which calls itself the scholarship of the United States says to-day of popular agitation—that it lets wise men argue questions, and fools decide them. But that early Athens, where fools decided the gravest questions of polity and right and wrong, where it was not safe to be just, and where property might be wrung from you by the prejudices of the mob to-morrow, which you had garnered up by the thrift and industry of to-day; that very Athens invented art, and sounded for us the depths of philosophy; God lent to it the noblest intellects, and it flashes to-day the torch that gilds yet the mountain peaks of the old world; while Egypt, the hunker conservative of antiquity, where nobody dared to differ from the priest, or to be wiser than his grandfather—where men pretended to be alive, though swaddled in the grave-clothes of creed and custom as close as their mummies in linen—is hid in the tomb it inhabited; and the intellect which Athens has created for us digs to-day those ashes to find out what hunkerism knew and did. [Cheers.] Now my idea of American civilization is that it is a second part, a repetition of that same sublime confidence in the public conscience and the public thought that made the groundwork of Grecian Democracy.

Well, we have been talking for twenty years. There have been various evidences of growth in education; I will tell you of one. The first evidence that a sinner convicted of sin, and too blind or too lazy to reform—the first evidence that he can give that his nature has been touched, is that he becomes a hypocrite; he has the grace to pretend to be some-

thing. Now, the first evidence that the American people gave of that commencing grace of hypocrisy was this: in 1833, when we commenced the Anti-Slavery agitation, the papers talked about slavery, bondage, American slavery, boldly, frankly and bluntly. In a few years it sounded hard; it had a grating effect; the hardest throat of the hardest Democrat felt it as it came out. So they spoke of the 'patriarchal institution,' (laughter,) then of the 'domestic institution,' (continued laughter,) and then of the 'peculiar institution,' (laughter)—and in a year or two it got beyond that. Mississippi published a report from her Senate, in which she went a stride beyond, and described it as 'economic subordination.' (Renewed laughter.) A Southern Methodist bishop was taken to task for holding slaves in reality, but his Methodist brethren were not courageous enough to say 'slaves' right out in meeting, and so they said the bishop must get rid of his 'impediment'—(loud laughter)—and the late Mr. Rufus Choate, in the last Democratic canvass in my own State, undertaking and necessitated to refer to the institutions of the South, and knowing that his old New England lips, that had spoken so many glorious free truths in the twenty years that were ended, could not foul their last days with the hated word, phrased it 'a different type of industry.' Now, hypocrisy—why, 'it is the homage that Vice renders to Virtue.' When men begin to get weary of capital punishment, they banish the gallows inside the jail-yard, and do not let anybody see it without a special card of invitation from the sheriff. And so they have banished slavery into pet phrases and fancy flash-words. If you should dig our Egyptian Hunkerism up from the grave into which it is rapidly sinking, we should have to get a commentator of the true German blood to find out what

all these queer, odd, peculiar, imaginative paraphrases mean in this middle of the Nineteenth Century. That was one evidence of progress.

I believe in moral suasion. I believe the age of bullets is over. I believe the age of ideas is come. I think that is the preaching of our country. The old Hindoo dreamed, you know, that he saw the human race led out to its varied fortune. First, he saw men bitted and curbed, and the reins went back to an iron hand. But his dream changed on and on, until at last he saw men led by reins that came from the brain, and went back into an unseen hand. It was the type of governments; the first a government of despotism, palpable iron; and the last our government, a government of brains, a government of ideas. I believe in it—in public opinion.

Yet, let me say, in passing, that I think you can make a better use of iron than forging it into chains. If you must have the metal, put it into Sharpe's rifles. It is a great deal better used that way than in fetters—a great deal better than in a clumsy statue of a mock great man, for hypocrites to kneel down and worship in a State-house yard. [Loud and renewed cheers and great hissing.] I am so unused to hisses lately that I have forgotten what I had to say. [Laughter and hisses.] I only know I meant what I did say.

My idea is, public opinion, literature, education, as governing elements.

But some men seem to think that our institutions are necessarily safe because we have free schools and cheap books, and a public opinion that controls. But that is no evidence of safety. India and China have had schools, and a school system almost identical with that of Massachusetts, for fifteen hundred years. And books are as cheap in Central and Northern Asia as they are in New York. But they have not secured liberty, nor

secured a controlling public opinion to either nation. Spain for three centuries had municipalities and town governments, as independent and self-supporting, and as representative of thought, as New England or New York has. But that did not save Spain. De Toqueville says that fifty years before the great revolution, public opinion was as omnipotent in France as it is to-day, but it did not save France. You cannot save men by machinery. What India and France and Spain wanted was live men, and that is what we want to-day; men who are willing to look their own destiny, and their own functions, and their own responsibilities in the face. 'Grant me to see, and Ajax asks no more,' was the prayer that the great poet put into the lips of his hero in the darkness that overspread the Grecian camp. All we want of American citizens is the opening of their own eyes, and seeing things as they are. To the intelligent, thoughtful and determined gaze of twenty millions of Christian people, there is nothing—no institution wicked and powerful enough to be capable of standing against it. In Keats's beautiful poem of 'Lamia,' a young man had been led captive by a phantom girl, and was the slave of her beauty, until the old teacher came in and fixed his thoughtful eye upon the figure, and it vanished, and the pupil started up himself again.

You see the great Commonwealth of Virginia fitly represented by a pyramid standing upon its apex. A Connecticut born man entered at one corner of her dominions, and fixed his cold grey eye upon the government of Virginia, and it almost vanished in his very gaze. For it seems that Virginia asked leave 'to be' of John Brown at Harper's Ferry. (Cheers and applause.) Connecticut has sent out many a school-master to the other thirty States; but never before so grand a teacher as that Litchfield-born school-master at Harper's

Ferry, writing upon the Natural Bridge in the face of nations his simple copy : ' Resistance to Tyrants is obedience to God.' (Loud cheers.)

I said that the lesson of the hour was insurrection. I ought not to apply that word to John Brown of Ossawatimie, for there was no insurrection in his case. It is a great mistake to call him an insurgent. This principle that I have endeavored so briefly to open to you, of absolute right and wrong, states what? Just this : ' Commonwealth of Virginia !' There is no such thing. No civil society, no government can exist, except on the basis of the willing submission of all its citizens, and by the performance of the duty of rendering equal justice between man and man.

Everything that calls itself a Government, and refuses that duty, or has not that assent, is no Government. It is only a pirate ship. Virginia, the Commonwealth of Virginia ! She is only a chronic insurrection. I mean exactly what I say. I am weighing my words now. She is a pirate ship, and John Brown sails the sea a Lord High Admiral of the Almighty, with his commission to sink every pirate he meets on God's ocean of the nineteenth century. (Cheers and applause.) I mean literally and exactly what I say. In God's world there are no majorities, no minorities ; one, on God's side, is a majority. You have often heard here, doubtless, and I need not tell you the ground of morals. The rights of that one man are as sacred as those of the miscalled Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia is only another Algiers. The barbarous horde who gag each other, imprison women for teaching children to read, prohibit the Bible, sell men on the auction-blocks, abolish marriage, condemn half their women to prostitution, and devote themselves to the breeding of human beings for sale, is only a larger and blacker Algiers. The only prayer of a

true man for such is, 'Gracious Heaven! unless they repent, send soon their Exmouth and Decatur.' John Brown has twice as much right to hang Gov. Wise as Gov. Wise has to hang him. (Cheers and hisses.) You see I am talking of that absolute essence of things that lives in the sight of the Eternal and the Infinite: not as men judge it in the rotten morals of the nineteenth century, among a herd of States that calls itself an empire because it weaves cotton and sells slaves. What I say is this: Harper's Ferry was the only government in that vicinity. Respecting the trial, Virginia, true to herself, has shown exactly the same haste that the pirate does when he tries a man on deck, and runs him up to the yard-arm. Unconsciously she is consistent. Now, you do not think this to-day, some of you, perhaps. But I tell you what absolute History shall judge of these forms and phantoms of ours. John Brown began his life, his active life, in Kansas. The South planted that seed; it reaps the first fruit now. Twelve years ago, the great men in Washington, the Websters and the Clays, planted the Mexican war; and they reaped their appropriate fruit in Gen. Taylor and Gen. Pierce pushing them from their statesmen's stools. The South planted the seeds of violence in Kansas, and taught peaceful Northern men familiarity with the bowie-knife and revolver. They planted 999 seeds, and this is the first one that has flowered; this is the first drop of the coming shower. People do me the honor to say, in some of the Western papers, that this is traceable to some teachings of mine. It is too much honor to such as me. Gladly, if it were not fulsome vanity, would I clutch this laurel of having any share in the great resolute daring of that man who flung himself against an empire in behalf of justice and liberty. They were not the bravest men who fought at Saratoga and Yorktown

in the war of 1776. O ! no ; it was rather those who flung themselves, at Lexington, few and feeble, against the embattled ranks of an empire till then thought irresistible. Elderly men in powdered wigs and red velvet smoothed their ruffles and cried ‘ mad-men.’ Full-fed custom-house men said, ‘ A pistol-shot against Gibraltar !’ But Capt. Ingraham, under the stars and stripes, dictating terms to the fleet of the Cæsars, was only the echo of that Lexington gun. Harper’s Ferry is the Lexington of to-day. Up to this moment, Brown’s life has been one unmixed success. Prudence, skill, courage, thrift, knowledge of his time, knowledge of his opponents, undaunted daring in the face of the nation—he had all these. He was the man who could leave Kansas, and go into Missouri, and take eleven men and give them to liberty, and bring them off on the horses which he carried with him, and two which he took as tribute from their masters in order to facilitate escape. Then, when he had passed his human *proteges* from the vulture of the United States to the safe shelter of the English lion, this is the brave, frank and sublime truster in God’s right and absolute justice, that entered his name in the city of Cleveland, ‘ John Brown, of Kansas,’ and advertised there two horses for sale, and stood in front of the auctioneer’s stand, notifying all bidders of the defect in the title. (Laughter.) But he added with nonchalance, when he told the story, ‘ They brought a very excellent price.’ (Laughter.) This is the man who, in the face of the nation, avowing his right, and endeavoring by what strength he had in behalf of the wronged, goes down to Harper’s Ferry to follow up his work. Well, men say he failed. Every man has his Moscow. Suppose he did fail, every man meets his Waterloo at last. There are two kinds of defeat. Whether in chains or in laurels, LIBERTY knows

nothing but victories. Bunker Hill soldiers call a defeat; but Liberty dates from it, though Warren lay dead on the field. Men say the attempt did not succeed. No man can command success. Whether it was well planned, and *deserved* to succeed, we shall be able to decide when Brown is free to tell us all he knows. Suppose he did fail, he has done a great deal still. Why, this is a decent country to live in now. (Laughter and cheers.) Actually, in this Sodom of ours, seventeen men have been found ready to die for an idea. God be thanked for John Brown, that he has discovered or created them. (Cheers.) I should feel some pride, if I was in Europe now, in confessing that I was an American. (Applause.) We have redeemed the long infamy of twenty years of subservience. But look back a bit. Is there anything new about this? Nothing at all. It is the natural result of anti-slavery teaching. For one, I accept it; I expected it. I cannot say that I prayed for it; I cannot say that I hoped for it. But at the same time, no sane man has looked upon this matter for twenty years, and supposed that we could go through this great moral convulsion, the great classes of society clashing and jostling against each other like frigates in a storm, and that there would not be such scenes as these.

Why, in 1835 it was the other way. Then it was my bull that gored your ox. Then ideas came in conflict, and men of violence, and men who had not made up their minds to wait for the slow conversion of conscience, men who trusted in their own right hands, men who believed in bowie-knives—why, such sacked the city of Philadelphia, such made New York to be governed by a mob; Boston saw its Mayor suppliant and kneeling to the chief of broad-cloth in broad daylight. It was all on that side. The natural result, the first result of this starting of ideas, is like people who get half awaked,



and use the first weapons that appear to them. The first developing and unfolding of national life were the mobs of 1835. People said it served us right, we had no right to the luxury of speaking our own minds ; it was too expensive ; these lavish, luxurious persons walking about here, and actually saying what they think ! Why, it was like speaking loud in the midst of the avalanches. To say ‘ Liberty ’ in a loud tone, the Constitution of 1789 might come down—it would not do. But now things have changed. We have been talking thirty years. Twenty years we have talked everywhere, under all circumstances ; we have been mobbed out of great cities, and pelted out of little ones ; we have been abused by great men and by little papers. (Laughter and applause.) What is the result ? The tables have been turned ; it is your bull that has gored my ox now. And men that still believe in violence, the five points of whose faith are the fist, the bowie-knife, fire, poison and the pistol, are ranged on the side of Liberty, and, unwilling to wait for the slow but sure steps of thought, lay on God’s altar the best they have. You cannot expect to put a real Puritan Presbyterian, as John Brown is—a regular Cromwellian dug up from two centuries—in the midst of our New England civilization, that dare not say its soul is its own, nor proclaim that it is wrong to sell a man at auction, and not have him show himself as he is. Put a hound in the presence of a deer, and he springs at his throat if he is a true bloodhound. Put a Christian in the presence of a sin, and he will spring at its throat if he is a true Christian. And so into an acid we might throw white matter, but unless it is chalk, it will not produce agitation. So, if in a world of sinners you were to put American Christianity, it would be calm as oil. But put one Christian like John Brown of Osawatomie, and he makes the whole

crystalize into right and wrong, and marshal themselves on one side or the other. And God makes him the text, and all he asks of our comparatively cowardly lips is to preach the sermon, and say to the American people that, whether that old man succeeded in a worldly sense or not, he stood a representative of law, of government, of right, of justice, of religion, and they were pirates that gathered about him, and sought to wreak vengeance by taking his life. The banks of the Potomac, doubly dear now to History and to Man! The dust of Washington rests there; and History will see forever on that river-side the brave old man on his pallet, whose dust, when God calls him hence, the Father of his country would be proud to make room for beside his own. But if Virginia tyrants dare hang him, after this mockery of a trial, it will take two more Washingtons at least to make the name of the State anything but abominable to the ages that come after. (Applause and hisses.) Well, I say what I really think (cheers and cries of 'good,' 'good.') George Washington was a great man. Yet I say what I really think. And I know, ladies and gentlemen, that, educated as you have been by the experience of the last ten years here, you would have thought me the silliest as well as the most cowardly man in the world if I should have come, with my twenty years behind me, and talked about anything else to-night except that great example which one man has set us on the banks of the Potomac. You expected, of course, that I should tell you my opinion of it.

I value this element that Brown has introduced into American politics for another reason. The South is a great power—no cowards in Virginia. (Laughter.) It was not cowardice. (Laughter.) Now, I try to speak very plain, but you will misun-

derstand me. There is no cowardice in Virginia. The South are not cowards. The lunatics in the Gospel were not cowards when they said, ' Art thou come to torment us before the time ? ' (Laughter.) They were brave enough, but they saw afar off.—They saw the tremendous power that was entering into that charmed circle ; they knew its inevitable victory. Virginia did not tremble at an old gray-headed man at Harper's Ferry ; they trembled at a John Brown in every man's own conscience. He had been there many years, and, like that terrific scene which Beckford has drawn for us in his *Hall of Eblis*, where all ran around, each man with an incurable wound in his bosom, and agreed not to speak of it, so the South has been running up and down its political and social life, and every man keeps his right hand pressed on the secret and incurable sore, with an understood agreement, in Church and State, that it never shall be mentioned, for fear the great ghastly fabric shall come to pieces at the talismanic word. Brown uttered it, and the whole machinery trembled to its very base.

I value that movement. Did you ever see a blacksmith shoe a restless horse ? If you have, you have seen him take a small cord, and tie his upper lip. If you ask him what he does it for, he will tell you he does it to give the beast something to think of.—(Laughter.) Now, the South has extensive schemes. She grasps with one hand a Mexico, and with the other she dictates terms to Church, she imposes conditions on State, she buys up Webster with a little, and Everett with nothing. (Great laughter and applause.) John Brown has given her something else to think of. He has turned her attention inwardly. He has taught her that there has been created a new element in this Northern mind ; that it is not merely the thinker, that it is not merely the editor, that it is not merely the moral reformer,

but the idea has pervaded all classes of society.— Call them madmen if you will. Hard to tell who's mad. The world says one man is mad. John Brown said the same of the Governor. You remember the madman in Edinburgh. A friend asked him what he was there for. 'Well,' said he, 'they said at home that I was mad; and I said I was not; but they had the majority.' (Laughter.) Just so it is in regard to John Brown. The nation says, He is mad. I appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober; I appeal from the American people drunk with cotton and the *New York Observer* (loud and long laughter) to the American people fifty years hence, when the light of civilization has had more time to penetrate, when self-interest has been rebuked by the world rising and giving its verdict on these great questions, when it is not a small band of Abolitionists, but the civilization of the nineteenth century that undertakes to enter the arena, and discuss its last great reform. When that day comes, what shall be thought of these first martyrs, who teach us how to live and how to die?

Suppose John Brown had not stayed at Harper's Ferry; suppose on that momentous Monday night, when the excited imaginations of two thousand Charlestown people had enlarged him and his little band into 400 white men and 200 blacks, he had vanished, and when the gallant troops arrived there, 2000 strong, they had found nobody! The mountains would have been peopled with enemies; the Alleghanies would have heaved with insurrection! You never would have convinced Virginia that all Pennsylvania was not armed and on the hills. Virginia has not slept sound since Nat Turner had an insurrection in 1831, and she bids fair never to have a nap now. (Laughter.) For this is not an insurrection; this is the penetration of a different element. Mark you, it is not the oppressed race ris-

ing. Recollect history. There never was a race held in chains that absolutely vindicated its own liberty but one. There never was a serf nor a slave whose own sword cut off his own chain but one.—Blue-eyed, light-haired Anglo-Saxon, it was not our race. We were serfs for three centuries, and we waited till commerce and Christianity, and a different law, had melted our fetters. We were crowded down into a villienage which crushed out our manhood so thoroughly that we hadn't vigor enough to redeem ourselves. Neither did France, neither did Spain, neither did the Northern nor the Southern races of Europe have that bright spot on their escutcheon, that they put an end to their slavery.—Blue-eyed, haughty, contemptuous Anglo-Saxons, it was the black—the only race in the record of history that ever, after a century of oppression, retained the vigor to write the charter of its emancipation with its own hand in the blood of the dominant race. Despised, calumniated, slandered San Domingo is the only instance in history where a race, with indestructible love of justice, serving a hundred years of oppression, rose up under their own leader, and with their own hands abolished slavery on their own soil. Wait, garrulous, vain-glorious, boasting Saxon, till we have done as much, before we talk of the cowardice of the black race.

The slaves of our country have not risen, but, as in all other cases, redemption will come from the interference of a wiser, higher, more advanced civilization on its exterior. It is the universal record of history, and ours is a repetition of the same scene in the drama. We have awakened at last the enthusiasm of both classes—those that act from impulse, and those that act from calculation. It is a libel on the Yankee to say that it includes the whole race, when you say that if you put a dollar on the other side of hell, the Yankee will spring for it at

any risk ; (laughter,) for there is an element even in the Yankee blood that obeys ideas—there is an impulsive, enthusiastic aspiration—something left to us from the old Puritan stock—that which made England what she was two centuries ago—that which is fated to give the closest grapple with the Slave Power to-day. This is an invasion by outside power. Civilization in 1600 crept along our shores, now planting her foot, and then retreating—now gaining a foothold, and then receding before barbarism—till at last came Jamestown and Plymouth, and then thirty States. Harper's Ferry is perhaps one of Raleigh's or Goswold's colonies, vanishing and to be swept away ; bye-and-bye will come the immortal one hundred and Plymouth Rock, with 'MANIFEST DESTINY' written by God's hand on their banner, and the right of unlimited 'ANNEXATION' granted by heaven itself.

It is the lesson of the age. The first cropping out of it is in such a man as John Brown. He did not measure his means. He was not thrifty as to his method ; he did not calculate closely enough, and he was defeated. What is defeat ? Nothing but education—nothing but the first step to something better. All that is wanted is that this public opinion shall not creep around like a servile coward, and unbought, but corrupt, disordered, insane public opinion proclaim that Gov. Wise, because he *says* he is a Governor, *is* a Governor, that Virginia is a State because she *says* she is so.

Thank God, I am not a citizen. You will remember, all of you, citizens of the United States, that there was not a Virginia gun fired at John Brown. Hundreds of well-armed Maryland and Virginia troops that went there, never dared to pull a trigger. *You* shot him ! Sixteen marines, to whom you pay \$8 a month—your own representatives.—When the disturbed State could not stand on her

own legs for trembling, you went there and strengthened the feeble knees, and held up the palsied hand. Sixteen men, with the Vulture of the Union above them (sensation)—your representatives! It was the covenant with death and agreement with hell, which you call the Union of thirty States, that took the old man by the throat with a pirate hand; and it will be the disgrace of our civilization if a gallows is ever erected in Virginia that bears his body. ‘The most resolute man I ever saw,’ says Governor Wise; ‘the most daring, the coolest. I would trust his truth about any question. The sincerest!’ Sincerity, courage, resolute daring—Virginia has nothing, nothing for those qualities but a scaffold!—(Applause.) In her broad dominion she can only afford him six feet for a grave! God help the Commonwealth that bids such welcome to the noblest qualities that can grace poor human nature! Yet that is the acknowledgment of Gov. Wise himself!

They say it cost the officers and persons in responsible positions more effort to keep hundreds of startled soldiers from shooting the five prisoners sixteen marines had made, than it cost those marines to take the Armory itself. Soldiers and civilians—both alike—only a mob fancying itself a government! And mark you, I have said they were not a government. They not only are not a government, but they have not even the remotest idea of what a government is. (Laughter.) They do not begin to have the faintest conception of what a civilized government is. Here is a man arraigned before a jury, or about to be. The State of Virginia, as she calls herself, is about to try him. The first step in that trial is a jury; the second is a judge; and at the head stands the Chief Executive of the State, who is to put his hand to the death-warrant before it can be executed; and yet that very Executive, who, according to the principles of the sublimest chapter in

Algernon Sidney's immortal book, is bound by the very responsibility that rests on him, to keep his mind impartial as to the guilt of the person arraigned, hastens down to Richmond, hurries to the platform, and proclaims to the assembled Commonwealth of Virginia, 'The man is a murderer, and ought to be hung.' Almost every lip in the State might have said it except that single lip of its Governor; and the moment he had uttered these words, in the theory of the English law it was not possible to impanel an impartial jury in the Commonwealth of Virginia; it was not possible to get the materials and the machinery to try him according to even the ugliest pattern of English jurisprudence. And yet the Governor does not know that he has written himself down a *non compos*, and the Commonwealth that he governs supposes it is still a Christian polity. —They have not the faintest conception of what goes to make up government. The worst Jeffries that ever, in his most drunken hour, climbed up a lamp-post in the streets of London, would not have tried a man who could not stand on his feet. There is no such record in the blackest roll of tyranny. If Jeffries could speak, he would thank God that at last his name might be taken down from the gibbet of History, since the Virginia Bench has made his worst act white, set against the blackness of this modern infamy. (Applause.) And yet the New York press daily prints the accounts of the trial. Trial! The Inquisition used to break every other bone in a man's body, and then lay him on a pallet, giving him neither counsel nor opportunity to consult one, and then wring from his tortured mouth something like a confession, and call it a trial. But it was heaven-robed innocence compared with the trial, or what the New York Press call so, that has been going on in startled, frightened



Charlestown. I speak what I know, and I speak what is but the breath and whisper of the summer breezes compared with the tornado of rebuke that will come back from the Press of Great Britain, when they hear that we affect to call that a jury trial, and blacken the names *Judge* and *Jury* by baptizing these pirate orgies with such honorable appellations.

I wish I could say anything worthy of the great deed which has taken place in our day—the opening of the sixth seal, the pouring out of the last vial but one on a corrupt and giant institution. I know that many men will deem me a fanatic for uttering this wholesale vituperation, as it will be called, upon a State, and this endorsement of a madman. I can only say that I have spoken on this anti-slavery question before the American people twenty years; that I have seen the day when this same phase of popular opinion was on the other side. You remember the first time I was ever privileged to stand on this platform by the magnanimous generosity of your clergyman, when New York was about to bully and crush out the freedom of speech at the dictation of Capt. Rynders. From that day to this, the same braving of public thought has been going on from here to Kansas, until it bloomed in the events of the last three years. It has changed the whole face of the sentiment in these Northern States. You meet with the evidence of it everywhere. When the first news from Harper's Ferry came to Massachusetts, if you were riding in the cars, if you were walking in the streets, if you met a Democrat or a Whig or a Republican, no matter what his politics, it was a singular circumstance that he did not speak of the guilt of Brown, of the atrocity of the deed, as you might have expected. The first impulsive expression, the first

outbreak of every man's words was, 'What a pity he did not succeed! (Laughter.) What a fool he was for not going off Monday, when he had all he wanted! How strange that he did not take his victory, and march away with it!' It indicated the unconscious leavening of a sympathy with the attempt. Days followed on; they commenced what they called their trial; you met the same classes again;—no man said he ought to be hung; no man said he was guilty; no man predicated anything of his moral position; every man voluntarily and inevitably seemed to give vent to his indignation at the farce of a trial—indicative again of that unheeded, unconscious, potent, but wide-spread sympathy on the side of Brown.

Do you suppose that these things mean nothing? What the tender and poetic youth dreams to-day, and conjures up with inarticulate speech, is to-morrow the vociferated result of public opinion, and the day after is the charter of nations. The sentiments we raise to intellect, and from intellect to character. The American people have begun to feel. The mute eloquence of the fugitive slave has gone up and down the highways and by-ways of the country; it will annex itself to the great American heart of the North, even in the most fossil state of its hunkerism, as a latent sympathy with its right side. This blow, like the first blow at Lexington, heard around the world—this blow at Harper's Ferry reveals men. Watch those about you, and you will see more of the temper and unheeded purpose and real moral position of men than you would imagine. This is the way nations are to be judged. Be not in a hurry; it will come soon enough from this sentiment. We stereotype feeling into intellect, and then into statutes, and finally into national character. We have got the first stage of growth.

Nature's live growths crowd out and rive dead matter. Ideas strangle statutes. Pulse-beats wear down granite, whether piled in jails or capitols. The people's hearts are the only title-deeds, after all. Your Barnburners said, 'Patroon titles are unrighteous.' Judges replied, 'Such is the law.' Wealth shrieked, 'Vested Rights!' Parties talked of Constitutions—still, the people said, 'Sin.' They shot a sheriff. A parrot press cried, 'Anarchy!' Lawyers growled, 'Murder!'—still, nobody was hung, if I recollect aright. To-day, the *heart* of the Barnburner beats in the statute-book of your State. John Brown's movement against slavery is exactly the same. Wait awhile, and you'll all agree with me. What is fanaticism to-day is the fashionable creed to-morrow, and trite as the multiplication-table a week after.

John Brown has stirred those omnipotent pulses—LYDIA MARIA CHILD's is one. She says, 'That dungeon is the place for me,' and writes a letter in maganimous appeal to the better nature of Gov. Wise. She says in it, 'John Brown is a hero; he has done a noble deed. I think he was all right; but he is sick; he is wounded; he wants a woman's nursing. I am an Abolitionist; I have been so thirty years. I think slavery is a sin, and John Brown a saint; but I want to come and nurse him; and I pledge my word that if you will open his prison-door, I will use the privilege, under sacred honor, only to nurse him. I enclose you a message to Brown; be sure and deliver it.' And the message was, 'Old man, God bless you! You have struck a noble blow; you have done a mighty work; God was with you; your heart was in the right place. I send you across five hundred miles the pulse of a woman's gratitude.' And Gov. Wise has opened the door, and announced to the world that she may go in.

John Brown has conquered the pirate. (Applause.)  
 Hope! there is hope everywhere. It is only the  
 universal history :

‘ Right forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the  
     throne ;  
 But that scaffold sways the future, and behind the  
     dim unknown  
 Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch  
     above his own.’



